

the enactment of the RTI were entirely homegrown and were largely insulated from external forces. But upon closer inspection of various sources, it becomes apparent that international actors, experiences and trends did significantly influence the formulation of the RTI in India, and that both the government and civil society drew on Freedom of Information (FoI) laws from other countries in drafting the RTI. India's enactment of RTI was concurrent to a global explosion in transparency laws, which, according to Sharma, is tied to a neoliberal trend, wherein the idea of freeing government information and freeing the market go hand in hand. This association of access to information and liberal capitalist democracy is antithetical to the very ideals held by the RTI activists, which explains why they so vociferously denied international influences in their campaign. In this manner, the dominant narrative of the RTI as being entirely homegrown is, despite evidence suggesting the contrary, reproduced and reinforced.

Overall, Sharma provides valuable insights and provocations, not only on the RTI in India but also on the notion of access to information more broadly. His unease with the link between neoliberal logic and the enactment of the RTI has a bearing on other contexts. If the demand for increased transparency of public information is indeed a product of liberal capitalist democracy, which goes hand in hand with the idea of freeing the market from the shackles of the state, then the assumed democratic nature of FoI legislation around the world must be questioned. In a world where state roles are progressively being privatized and outsourced, legislation that aids citizens in holding public officials to account becomes less consequential. To what extent can democracy be deepened through access to information when public functions are increasingly performed by private entities that do not fall within the ambit of transparency laws?

This book will be of significance to people interested in ex ante policymaking processes, in South Asian law and politics, and in social movements and civil society.

GAIA VON HATZFELDT  
*University of Edinburgh*

*Blood Oil: Tyrants, Violence, and the Rules that Run the World.* Leif Wenar. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 552 pp. \$34.95 (cloth).

Leif Wenar, Professor of Philosophy at King's College, University of London, strives to place morality at the core of global trade in natural resources. In a wide-ranging thesis, drawing on Niccolò Machiavelli, John Locke, and many other philosophers, and inspired by the U.K. campaigning organization Global Witness, the author builds a compelling case for a trade boycott on oil, gas, gold, and other mineral exports from some 30 nations run by corrupt regimes.<sup>1</sup>

Wenar draws inspiration from research into an eighteenth-century campaign, headed by a small group of British Quakers, to end the Atlantic slave trade. The British elite at the time was deeply involved and enriched by slavery. As the author stresses, the Lord Mayor of London was the richest absentee plantation owner of the day and dozens of Members of Parliament owned Caribbean plantations. Additionally, the author cites the campaign to end South African apartheid as another cause that challenged entrenched powerful economic interests.

While the thought of forcing resource-rich, corrupt regimes to change their ways by means of Western economic pressures may seem far-fetched, *Blood Oil*

should not be swiftly dismissed. At 371 pages, plus 90 pages of notes and references, it considers the possibilities of a new morality in global commerce. This volume is a valuable contribution to the growing body of work by academics and civil society organizations on critical issues related to corruption, human rights, and security. As these topics are now increasingly raised in university graduate courses concerned with business, law, and international development, it has never been as timely.

"The resource curse" is a widely used phrase that suggests that nations endowed with natural resources are doomed to misuse their assets and spawn rampant corruption. A number of major petroleum producing countries are democratic, such as Norway, Canada, the United Kingdom, and United States, but Wenar underscores that the majority are ruthlessly authoritarian. Oil is the most valuable good traded across borders. Despite the efforts of the manufacturers of electric automobiles, oil drives 90% of the world's transportation. Yet much of the world's oil comes from countries run by corrupt and repressive regimes.

The West trades with these "might is right" nations because we have long believed we need their natural resources to power our own economies, even though we are well aware that the regimes in charge of these countries routinely steal the resource revenues from their citizens. The corruption at the helm of the governments of many of the resource-rich countries has been a prime factor in appalling levels of poverty. Humanitarian arguments alone ought to suffice in leading Western governments to formulate strategies that can force change. Security arguments are just as compelling; after all, most of the major security crises in recent decades have involved oil-exporting countries.

As Wenar stresses, for more than 40 years, starting in 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) held the West hostage to its resource-pricing demands. While the rulers of most of these OPEC countries became very rich, built modern armies, and captured all the levers of governance, most citizens of these countries have been forced to survive intense poverty.

The dramatic fall in oil and other natural resource prices over the last 18 months has undermined OPEC's power and opens the door to pragmatically consider the campaigning proposal at the center of *Blood Oil*. This is the moment to challenge the "might is right" regimes.

The book takes the reader on a long journey around the world of oil dictatorships, with many detours into history and philosophy. The climax of this journey is the proposal that the West should adopt a "Clean Trade Act" that would see the end of Western purchases of natural resources from authoritarian resource-exporting regimes.

This is a call for increasing Western pressure on the corrupt regimes to convince them to be more accountable to their own citizens. Such efforts, Wenar argues, will enhance our security, while ensuring that we no longer violate our principles by purchasing stolen goods.

A "Clean Trade Act" is a catchy title for what amounts to a regime of trade boycotts and sanctions on corrupt foreign governments. Its viability requires the cooperation not of just Western governments, but of private sector actions. Wenar proposes that multinational corporations engaged in extractive industries can be convinced to join the opposition to "might is right" regimes by curbing their access to capital. Inspired by the antislavery campaigns of the eighteenth century, the author suggests widespread citizen action to highlight the reputational damage to the major corporations by continuing to work with corrupt foreign governments.

No international civil society organization has been as effective in building public awareness of the humanitarian impact of illicit trade in natural resources as Global Witness. Its campaigns, notably “Blood Diamonds” in Africa and work on deforestation in Asia, have been an inspiration to Wenar. But can the well-documented crimes of so many regimes that govern vast natural resources, and the arguments marshaled by Wenar, combine to establish an effective “Clean Trade Act”?

Who can dispute that it is intolerable that we preach the values of freedom and democracy and human rights, yet we trade and buy oil and other minerals from governments that trample on such values?

Perhaps *Blood Oil* will serve to strengthen the efforts pursued by anti-corruption civil society organizations over many years to mobilize international actions to end the impunity of the tiny group of elites who rule so many of the world’s resource-rich nations. Rarely before has the case for such action been so comprehensively presented.

### Note

1. Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Myanmar, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen.

FRANK VOGL

*Transparency International & The Partnership for Transparency Fund*

*Governing Civil Service Pay in China*. Alfred M. Wu. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2014. 236 pp. \$32 (paper).

*Governing Civil Service Pay in China*, the recent work of Alfred M. Wu, provides a comprehensive overview of the organization, development, ever-changing problems, and prospects of civil service pay reforms in China. It offers an incisive and thought-provoking examination of economic reforms in China and how the government has attempted to shape a contemporary civil service system that in turn would improve state capacity and government legitimacy. Wu probes efforts to improve the effectiveness of civil service in China and links how an effective pay system has aided in providing strong incentives for better public service, combating corruption and dissatisfaction among civil servants.

The author draws his conclusions from government documents, field notes, the insights of others, and detailed discussions of the crucial tasks and issues confronting the institution. In the process, he delivers a first-rate account of how civil service pay works today in China and how it has evolved over time.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is a broad introduction that demonstrates the need for such a study. References are made to prior research. The second chapter explores its history, providing insight into the present and future of civil service pay in China. Chapter 3 further explores changes due to acts that include the Equal Pay Policy. Other chapters discuss pay determination in two provinces, methods of improving public sector pay management such as decentralized versus centralized pay setting, civil service pay levels, and so forth. The personnel system, governance of service, and the position of civil service pay in the political community are also covered.

This book is a timely study of a field that has yet to be closely examined despite great demand. It includes information on sensitive and important issues involving